

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of claims:

Claims 1-20 (cancelled).

21. (New) An apparatus for compressing at least a portion of a patient's skeleton, joints and/or spine during imaging, the apparatus comprising:

a first base member;

a pair of flexible shoulder straps connected to the first base member and adapted to bear against the shoulders of the patient;

a resilient member mounted to the first base member, the resilient member being resiliently compressible or resiliently stretchable; and

a foot plate coupled with the resilient member such that the foot plate can be selectively moved relative to the first base member to resiliently compress or resiliently stretch the resilient member, the foot plate being adapted to receive the feet of the patient when the flexible shoulder straps bear against the shoulders of the patient.

22. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, further comprising a chest strap extending between the pair of flexible shoulder straps.

23. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, further comprising a second base member connected to the first base member, the shoulder straps being connected to the second base member while the foot plate is disposed on the first base member.

24. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 23, wherein the first base member is connected to the second base member by at least one flexible strap.

25. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 23, wherein the first base member and the second base member each comprise a substantially flat panel.

26. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the pair of flexible shoulder straps can be selectively positioned on the first base member to selectively increase or decrease the length of the straps.

27. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the pair of flexible shoulder straps can be selectively positioned on the first base member to selectively increase or decrease the distance between the pair of shoulder straps.

28. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the first base member comprises a first panel and a second panel connected to the first panel, the shoulder straps being connected to the second panel while the foot plate is disposed on the first panel.

29. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the resilient member comprises an elastic medium.

30. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 29, wherein the elastic medium comprises shock cord, surgical tubing, or bungee cord.

31. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, wherein the resilient member comprises a force resistant medium.

32. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 31, wherein the force resistant medium comprises a coil spring or a viscoelastic rod.

33. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, further comprising an anchor member mounted to the base, the resilient member extending between the foot plate and the anchor member.

34. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 33, wherein the anchor member is mounted to the base member so that the anchor member can be selectively moved along the length of the base member.

35. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 33, wherein the anchor member is slidably coupled to the base member.

36. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 33, further comprising a pressure transfer member connected to the foot plate and to an end of the resilient member.

37. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 36, wherein the anchor member comprises a cylinder, at least a portion of the resilient member and at least a portion of the pressure transfer member being disposed in the cylinder.

38. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 36, wherein the pressure transfer member comprises pressure markings to indicate the level of pressure applied to the foot plate.

39. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, further comprising a leg immobilizer connected to the base member.

40. (New) The apparatus as recited in claim 21, further comprising a foot immobilizer connected to the foot plate.

41. (New) A method for compressing at least a portion of a patient's skeleton, joints and/or spine during imaging, the method comprising:

placing a patient in a supine position;

positioning the feet of the patient in the supine position against a foot plate so that each of the legs of the patient are at least partially bent, the foot plate being resiliently disposed on a base member;

causing the legs of the patient to straighten while the shoulders of the patient are retained in a substantially fixed position such that the foot plate is resiliently displaced a distance along the base member, thereby causing at least a portion of a patient's skeleton, joints and/or spine between the feet and the shoulders of the patient to be compressed; and

taking an image of the at least partially compressed skeleton, joints and/or spine of the patient.

42. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising positioning a pair of flexible shoulder straps over the shoulders of the patient so that the shoulder straps retain the shoulders of the patient in the substantially fixed position.

43. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising coupling the shoulder straps together with a chest strap.

44. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising adjusting the location of the foot plate long the base member before positioning the feet of the patient in the supine position against the foot plate.

45. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising securing the legs of the patient to the base member after the legs of the patient are straightened.

46. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising securing the feet of the patient to the foot plate.

47. (New) The method as recited in claim 41, further comprising displacing the foot plate along the base member so as to resiliently compress or resiliently stretch a resilient member coupled with the foot plate.

48. (New) The method as recited in claim 47, wherein the resilient member comprises an elastic medium.

49. (New) The method as recited in claim 48, wherein the elastic medium comprises shock cord, surgical tubing, or bungee cord.

50. (New) The method as recited in claim 47, wherein the resilient member comprises a force resistant medium.

51. (New) The method as recited in claim 50, wherein the force resistant medium comprises a coil spring or a viscoelastic rod.